

# THE ALLEGORICAL ROLES OF CHARACTERS IN *THE RAINBOW*

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The strangely dynamic and disturbing world of *The Rainbow* has been much talked upon and given such ambiguous terms as “rhythmic”, “mystic”, “religious”, and “prophetic”;<sup>1</sup> but the novel itself is still not clearly explained. To understand the work as an artistic whole, it seems that one should set the dynamic description of life on one side, and the static or allegorical role of each character on the other,<sup>2</sup> and discover the relationship between the two. The determined ‘role’ or static aspect of each character has been barely acknowledged, except in its passive sense that Lawrence did away with characterization and plot and used people as vessels for the impersonal, primitive and unreasonable forces in which he was primarily interested.<sup>3</sup> Otherwise, characters such as Anton Skrebensky have been criticized for being flat and static<sup>4</sup> (which is perhaps true, but why, then, Lydia—a most static figure—has not been criticized?). But the positive significance of the static function of characters should be noticed at the same time. The people not only *do not have* ‘characters’ in the sense of the nineteenth-century realism but *dose have* their respective ‘roles’ in the novel, which this thesis will study, and the dynamic aspects of the novel are possible only in relation to those ‘roles’.

The person who plays a most definite role is Lydia Lensky. Perhaps the significance of her role, her curiously silent, static character, has been underestimated—the role upon which, the present writer believes, the whole novel stands. She rarely speaks. She never explains or describes herself. If one tries to fathom her thoughts or feelings, one should be surprised to find how little one’s information is. It is true that beginning few pages of the second chapter describe her former marriage with a Polish revolutionary aristocrat, the rebellion, the death of their children during their campaign, the collapse, the flight, and finally his death, followed by her spiritless ghostly journey with the only child left in her hand, from which, unwillingly but gradually, she was awakened towards the cruel call of spring and new life. But this process of her inner life is revealed not before but only after the dramatic encounter with Tom Brangwen and his proposal take place: he knew almost nothing about her when they got married. Even afterwards, her story is presented not as the realistic or emotional drama but as the visionary story of the past, through the eyes which look back in simple, detached lucidity. Moreover, that detachment is rooted in her emotional death or numbness which separates her even from the present and deprives her of the sense of actuality or of time.

Her dying husband with his tortured eyes and the skin drawn tight

over his face, he was as a vision to her, not a reality. In a vision he was buried and put away. Then the vision ceased, she was untroubled, time went on grey, uncoloured, like a long journey where she sat unconscious as the landscape unrolled beside her. . . . She was aware of people who passed around her, not as persons, but as looming presences. . . . But she *had felt* Brangwen go by almost as if he *had brushed* her. She *had tingled* in body as she *had gone* on up the road. (pp. 51-55—italics by the present writer)<sup>5</sup>

Even the encounter with Tom woke her only halfway out of the depth of her stupor, to be impressed on her mind only as a “brushing” or “tingling” disturbance across the veil of “uncoloured” timeless numbness. The past perfect tense symbolically sets the experience behind this timelessly “unrolling” veil, at the same time placing her previous history as though infinitely far off behind. That was also how it seemed vaguely to Tom.

When she talked, of Poland or of what had been, it was all so foreign, she scarcely communicated anything to him. (p. 57)

Although his sense of her foreignness at the first glance seems to be geographical and cultural, instead of chronological, it contains something more mysterious, which is connected at the bottom with the style in which her history is told.

So consistently she is drawn as a woman who does not speak, is not spoken of, or is not to be understood that the sense of the mysterious, strange veil strikes the reader with the intimation of something symbolic there. Then, judging from the scene of her first silent meeting with Tom which begins with,

...he saw a woman approaching. But he was thinking for the moment of the horse.

Then he turned to look at her. She was dressed in black, was apparently rather small and slight, beneath her long black cloak, and she wore a black bonnet, (p. 29)

is it not possible to presume that her role is Death? By associating the “uncoloured” timeless veil of mystery around her with her black clothing, one can explain the silence and indifference of the woman in contrast with life—especially with “the teeming life of creation” (p. 9) of the Marsh in which the Brangwens lived, and with the youth and “livingness” in Tom which she “enjoyed like morning.” (p. 55)

What is Death in Lydia? First, it is the loss of youth and homeland.

When she rocked her baby at evening, maybe she fell into a Polish slumber song, or she talked sometimes to herself in Polish. Other-

wise she did not think of Poland, nor of the life to which she *had belonged*. It was a great blot looming *black* in its darkness. . . . and almost savagely she turned again to life, demanding her life back again, demanding that it should be as it *had been* when she was a girl, on the land at home, under the sky. (pp. 52-53—italics by the present writer)

At the same time, it is the escape from life, struggle, and suffering.

And she shrank away again, back into her darkness, and for a long while remained blotted safely away from living. (p. 53)

Also it is the negation of life and of connection with other beings, which haunted the relationship between Tom and herself.

...as she was in his arms, her head sank, she leaned it against him, and lay still, with sunk head, a little tired, effaced because she was tired. And in her tiredness was a certain negation of him. (p. 46)

And yet, puzzlingly, Death is also the positive force of abstraction and unreality which draws him towards her.

It was her curious, absorbed, flitting motion, as if she were passing unseen by everybody, that first arrested him. (p. 29)

She lay still against him, taking his physical warmth without heed. It was great confirmation for him to feel her there, absorbing the warmth from him, giving him back her weight and her strange confidence. (p. 47)

In a way she is the 'vampire', Death, which sucks his warm blood into itself, and yet it attracts him and gives him the "confirmation", the sense of reality, of his own being. The paradox of Death as : (1) the negation of life, (2) the absorbing void and demand for life, and (3) the confirmation of life—this paradox alone seems to explain his horror of her and the curiously contradictory expression of her eyes and mouth.

Her eyes, with a *blackness* of memory struggling with passion, primitive and electric away at the back of them, *rejected* him and *absorbed* him at once. . . . she leaned forward a little, and with a strange, primeval suggestion of embrace, held him her mouth. It was *ugly-beautiful*, and he could not bear it. He put his mouth on hers, and slowly, slowly the response came, *gathering* force

and passion, till it seemed to him she was thundering at him till he could bear no more. He drew away, *white, unbreathing*. Only, in his blue eyes, was *something of himself concentrated*. And in her eyes was *a little smile upon a black void*. (pp. 48-49—italics by the present writer)

Although the word “passion” seems to represent life or youth itself and therefore may delude the reader, it is rather the ‘demand’ for life which exists only in relation to life in Tom. As her response gathers force and passion, it is as though she is gathering all the energy out of him, leaving him “white, unbreathing,” and herself remaining strangely cool and detached throughout. But the sucking of life paradoxically leaves in his young blue eyes the “concentrated” sense of his own being, which is just reflected and confirmed in the “little smile” upon the “black void” of her eyes.

In order to understand why he is drawn to her and is confirmed in spite of the horror, the pain, and the loss of life, let us go back to the beginning of the novel and think of the ‘role’ which had been demanded and even already set up before Lydia herself appeared to fill it.

There was a look in the eyes of the Brangwens as if they were expecting something unknown, about which they were eager. (p. 7)

This expectation of the “unknown” manifests itself, more concretely, in the Brangwen women’s aspiration to get out of the Marsh, to participate in the “other” activities going on “beyond” in the city just ahead of them, and in their adoration and self-identification dream upon the vicar, the squire, and his family—the “others” in the village—who have the appearances, manners, and speech alien to the villagers. In Tom, who was brought up among the women, the aspiration finds its further development and was set on fire by his meeting at Matlock with a monkey-faced aristocrat, “a small, withered foreigner of ancient breeding” (p. 25). The ugliness and the “old, ageless,” (p. 24) “withered” look, the qualities of Death, are already present in this man, which Tom marvelled, transported, and later thought of night and day. As is shown by the title of the first chapter, “How Tom Brangwen Married a Polish Lady,” the significance of Lydia as a “Polish” (a foreigner) and a “lady” (an aristocrat) is presented and defined before her appearance: it is the “unknown,” “beyond,” “strange,” “other” and “ageless” (timeless and unreal) that rouses his strongest desire. Also the remaining aspect of her role, a woman, must be considered, but let us proceed without it for the time being.

What is common to the desires of Tom and of the previous generations is that the substance and identity of their object, ‘the other’, is invisible and, therefore, non-existent to themselves. What the foreigner is or what he is thinking of does not matter to Tom, who does not know even the other’s name. The other man exists simply as ‘the other’ that is beyond the understanding of the Brangwens, as the wall which rejects them (simply by existing there) to enter its inside. This wall is certainly

not the whole of the other's being, but it is the total of 'the other' that exists and is tangible *in the eyes of* the Brangwens. For them, the only reality (or existence) of 'the other' is the strangeness of 'the other' in its appearance, manner, and manner of speech, which is 'the wall' at the same time.

About 1840, a canal was constructed across the meadows of the Marsh Farm, connecting the newly-opened collieries of the Ere-wash Valley. A high embankment travelled along the fields to carry the canal, which passed close to the homestead, and, reaching the road, went over in a heavy bridge.

So the Marsh was *shut off* from Ilkeston, and *enclosed* in the small valley bed, which ended in a bushy hill and the village spire of Cossethay. (pp. 11-12—italics by the present writer)

What is implied in this passage is that the "embankment" appeared both as the sign of the other world of industrialization outside the Marsh and as the wall which encloses one and prohibits one to step beyond. (It is important to distinguish between the actual industrialization, which is invisible to the Brangwens, and this 'otherness', sign, of industrialization.) There is the tension between the man, who aspires to go beyond, and the wall which rejects him, which foretells the strained relationship between the man and the 'other' being. The exclusiveness of the wall gives the man the sense of being "enclosed" and limited, but the sight (or the contact) of the wall gives him the sense of being somehow related to the invisible beyond. He finds "the extended being" (p. 11) of himself free and unlimited in 'the other', even if only in his imagination. So, even when the man detests the state of enclosure (or exclusion), even because of it, he cannot but desire the contact with 'the other'.

Then, it is rather weird and horrible to think of the situation when 'the other', the exclusion, is absolute, which is Death. But, before that, let us think of the role of 'a woman' for the Brangwen men.

In the close intimacy of the farm kitchen, the woman occupied the supreme position.... The woman was the symbol for that further life which comprised religion and love and morality. The men placed in her hands their own conscience, they said to her 'Be my conscience-keeper, be the angel at the doorway guarding my outgoing and my incoming.' And the woman fulfilled her trust, the men rested implicitly in her, receiving her praise or her blame with pleasure or with anger, rebelling and storming, but never for a moment really escaping in their own souls from her prerogative. (p 19)

Here the part of 'the other' is played by the woman, which is similar to the relationship between Tom and the foreigner or between the Brangwens and the embankment,

except that the inside and the outside of the enclosure are reversed in actuality (but only in actuality). In actuality, it is the woman's world that is in the middle, surrounded by the men's teeming but raging world of life, and the men come in and go out to take a rest out of their confused blinded life. But as far as their own relationship is concerned, it is rather the men that feel both guarded and limited by the symbolic role of the woman. The beyond is placed in the woman who is inside and yet excluding the men's limited world. The relationship is more ambiguous than in case of the foreigner, and the words such as "keeper", "guarding", "outgoing", "incoming", "rested", and "pleasure" echo the sense of 'acceptance' along with 'exclusion'. It can be inferred that due to this acceptance of the men, the woman's world is limited along with theirs, so far as they fight no further battle to go beyond their circle. All this seems to explain why Tom detested the affair with a prostitute (who was not 'the other'), why "he dreamed day and night, absorbedly, of a voluptuous woman *and* of the meeting with a small withered foreigner" (p. 25—the underline by the present writer), and why yet it seemed that "perhaps the meeting with the foreigner was the more significant." The woman whom Tom met at Matlock was only half a lady, and it is her "voluptuous" womanhood that stands out, which shows more strongly the sexual desirability, the call for contact and touch, the sign of the acceptance, than the exclusion of 'the other' emphasized by the foreigner.

Still, the relationship between the mother and the son seems to require a further consideration. Although Lawrence, after writing *Sons and Lovers*, apparently does not deal with this theme here, one should notice the death of Tom's mother as the crucial "blow" (p. 21) that threw him into the utterly blind confusion of life (where all the unseen world seemed "up against him"), which necessitated the appearance of Lydia's special role. The mother and the son are mutually closely related, but there is always the exclusion, the prohibition of incest and oneness (or dependence), which lies latent and gets stronger as he grows older. The stronger the tie is, the bigger and severer the sense of exclusion grows. Even between Tom and his sister, after the death of their mother,

They meant a very great deal to each other, but they were both under a strange unnatural tension. (p. 21)

Then, the death of his mother must have meant to Tom the utter exclusion from her. The mother was transformed into 'the absolute other' which is Death. Tom lost the touch with the mother, the other, and now his raging life requires the vision and touch of something which is the mother and Death at the same time.

Therefore, one cannot but think of Lydia's role not only as a woman but as a mother and Death. This seems to explain why there is so much difference between the voluptuous young woman at Matlock and the "ugly-beautiful" ghostly Lydia, who, nevertheless, draws him in with a "primeval suggestion of embrace" (p. 48)—"of infinite embrace" (p. 46). When the embrace (the intimate contact and acceptance) of the woman, which is put in the severer tension (acceptance-exclusion) of motherhood, is

taken on by Death, it becomes the "infinite embrace" which horrifies and yet compels Tom. It is symbolic that Lydia is the name of Lawrence's own dead mother. Lydia of the novel, too, is the mother of a child, Anna Lensky, and it is only by noticing Tom's sympathy or self-equation with the child that one can see the full import of the relationship between Tom and Lydia.

Looking through the window, he saw her seated in the rocking chair with the child.... The fair head with its wild, fierce hair was drooping towards the fire-warmth, which reflected on the bright cheeks and clear skin of the child, who seemed to be musing, almost like a grown-up person. The mother's face was dark and still, and he saw, with a pang, that she was away back in the life that had been.... The little girl was almost asleep. It was her will which kept her eyes so wide.

Suddenly she looked round, troubled, as the wind shook the house, and Brangwen saw the small lips move.... Then he heard the low, monotonous murmur of a song in a foreign language. Then a great burst of wind, the mother seemed to have drifted away, the child's eyes were black and dilated. Brangwen looked up at the clouds which packed in great, alarming haste across the dark sky.

Then there came the child's high, complaining, yet imperative voice :

'Don't sing that stuff, mother, I don't want to hear it.'

The singing died away.

'You will go to bed,' said the mother.

He saw the clinging protest of the child, the unmoved far-awayness of the mother, the clinging, grasping effort of the child. Then suddenly the clear childish challenge :

'I want you to tell me a story.'

The wind blew, the story began, the child nestled against the mother, Brangwen waited outside... Along with the child, he felt a curious strain on him, a suffering like a fate. (pp. 43-44)

Little as it was, the child had to face the Death in its mother—the utter exclusion from her in spite of her sight and voice, which were dark and obscure. The abstraction of the mother away into the life which "had been" deprived the child of her contact, the wall of protection, so that all the unseen world outside seemed stormy and gathering against the little lighted world of the child. The child calls her : and, at the sight of her attention (her presence) being off and on as if blown by the wind, the child clings jealously to her with all its might, with its eyes unnaturally wide open to guard her shadowy sight. The child challenges the 'foreignness' of her Polish song. In the middle of the tension, the mother remains "unmoved" and far away.

This piteous sight of the sleepless child, who looks so warmed up and childish and yet estranged, cannot but move anybody except the mother who is absent and is utterly 'the other'. She doesn't watch the lighted child; and Tom, who is himself standing "outside" and excluded from their world, cannot help watching the child and feeling *its* strain upon himself, though he is part of the stormy dark world against which the child is fighting. Thus he experiences the contrast between the dark mother and the lighted child, between her inaudible voice and the "clear" challenge of the child, which exists between the silence and the storm, between death and the blind life. But, were it not for the *relationship* between the mother and the child, perhaps the contrast would be lost, the light of the child gone out. The blind dark storm of life would fall in—the darkness in which presently Tom stands. The relationship between the mother and the child is the frail band of light between the two darknesses of death and life. And the light is enkindled in the child, who is on the verge of life, against the mother who is on the verge of death and who rejects and accepts the child at once.

Here one seems to understand why the blind life of Tom, limited and swollen with too much life, is directed by the contact with Lydia into the experience of such dynamic forces in himself as shown below.

But he let go his hold on himself, he relinquished himself, and knew the subterranean force of his desire to come to her, to be with her, to mingle with her, losing himself to find her, to find himself in her.... His blood beat up in waves of desire.... Blind and destroyed, he pressed forward, nearer, nearer, to receive the consummation of himself, he received within the darkness which should swallow him and yield him up to himself. If he could come really within the blazing kernel of darkness, if really he could be destroyed, burnt away till he lit with her in one consummation, that were supreme, supreme. (p. 95)

His life, the heavy strained pulse of the Brangwen blood, is vivified against Death-Mother. Lydia was Death, but it was by "relinquishing" himself into a child that Tom turned Death into his mother, who should "swallow" and "receive" him but also exclude and "yield him up to himself". His being was "lit" up in the light, in his relationship with Death, in his consummation *in* the darkness.

Still, one can question whether he lost something by turning Death into his mother, by relinquishing himself. In approaching her hostile and yet "not quite hostile" (p. 94), even "very intimate", he is not having the sharp face-to-face contact with Death itself, which seems to have been suggested by the appearance of the foreigner. By "mingling" with Death, Tom has made the experience intense but somewhat too "close" (p. 105) and stifling, limited along with himself. The circle of their marriage was for ever "wordless" (*in* Death) and enclosed, not leading to further space, from which the growing child (Anna, seventeen) wanted to get away and



which was not finally satisfying even to Tom.

What was missing in his life, that, in his ravening soul, he was not satisfied ? (p. 129)

And his unexpected death, the blind suffocation in the flood, shows the lack of his access with Death itself—Death which is not Mother but quite hostile, unlimited.

Also there is an interesting (if not too strong) protest made by Lydia herself. Although so perfect and definite her role seems, she herself resents it a little. She retorted to him, "You should not want so much attention," (p. 92) and demanded him "to know there is somebody there beside yourself [himself]." (p. 94) Lydia wants him to realize her as 'the other', not as Death-Mother whom the child depends upon without giving "his active participation". (p. 95) In other words, she wanted him to "know" her and face her *as* the unknown, which was terrible as Death itself to him, instead of remaining blind and absorbed in it. But her sighing at last and calling him to her seems to show her acquiescence to his final impotence there, and to her relinquished role as Death-Mother.

But there is a new battle for the next generation. For Anna, who started rebelling against the self-conclusiveness of Death-Mother, Lensky, Lydia's former husband, seems to have meant Death itself.

She had a mother-of-pearl rosary that had been her own father's. What it meant to her she could never say. But the string of moonlight and silver, when she had it between her fingers, filled her with strange passion. She learned at school a little Latin... she learned how to say her rosary.... What these words meant when translated was not the same as the pale rosary meant. There was a discrepancy, a falsehood.... She put it away. It was her instinct to put all these things away. It was her instinct to avoid thinking, to avoid it, to save herself. (pp. 104-105)

Her father was dead before she could remember him. He was the utter unknown. The rosary was the utter unknown. She felt drawn to touch 'the other'. But what the rosary meant, when translated, was no longer foreign, no longer the rosary itself. That kind of approach proved false. Neither can she, or would she like to, be swallowed up, losing herself, *in* the mystery as if in the mother. It seems that she should, without losing herself, face and touch the unknown itself, which horrifies her because it is Death. She was not mature or strong enough. Her instinct was "to save herself" from Death, by avoiding to notice it. In her very denial of the unknown, however, the attraction to it seems immanent.

That is exactly the way reflected on her young marriage with Will Brangwen. Will, Tom's nephew, wants Anna to be his Death-Mother, which is his attitude towards the Christian mysteries (miracles) and the cathedrals as well.

His soul leapt, soared up into the great church. His body stood still, *absorbed* by the height. His soul leapt up into the gloom, into possession, it reeled, it swooned with a great *escape*, it quivered *in* the womb, *in* the hush and the gloom of fecundity, like seed of procreation in *ecstasy*. (p. 201 — italics by the present writer)

The word “ecstasy” is frequently used to describe the *loss* of himself *in* “the womb”-and-“the hush” which is Death-Mother. It is against this “ecstasy” that Anna always rebels. By seizing hold of the little carvings of imps, she interprets them to him in terms of actual life of the carver and his wife.

She pointed him to a plump, sly, malicious little face carved in stone.

‘He knew her, the man who carved her,’ said Anna. I’m sure she was his wife.’... ‘Didn’t he hate her? He must have been a nice man! Look at her – isn’t it awfully good – just like a shrewish woman. He must have enjoyed putting her in like that. He got his own back on her, didn’t he?’... She laughed with a Pouf! of laughter.

‘You hate to think he put his wife in your cathedral, don’t you?’ she mocked, with a tinkle of profane laughter. (pp. 204-205)

When Will cried ecstatically at the first sight of the cathedral, “There she is,” (p. 200) Anna was irritated over the “she”. Now with her mockery she subtly destroys the idolatries of the church and of womanhood which were one in his worship of Death-Mother. By assuming that the carver “knew” the woman and thus depriving the role of ‘the unknown’ of her, and by letting Will see the ugliness of the face as “malicious” and hateful *against* the man, Anna calls her husband out of his dear “escape” from the blind stormy life. At the same time, she casts off the role of Death-Mother which he tries to put on her, fighting him off.

But neither did she want to be absorbed *by* him. If she served and worshipped him like a slave, and roused his proud distant passion which ignored her existence, it was only “part of the game” (p. 163) to make him seem the utterly unknown, which she was ready to fight against. She loved the touch of Death when he came upon her like “a hawk” upon “his prey” (p. 162). But when she was carried off and he, satiated, “moved with a proud, insolent slouch of the body” (p. 163), immediately she began to retaliate on him. By perceiving the “insolent slouch” of his body, she was sensing the falsehood, the farce, of making the carnal unknown into the absolute (selfcompleted and thus limited) unknown, which even belittled his body and was achieved by absorbing her life and existence ‘other’ than himself. Thus when she fought him “savagely” and made him notice her “as the enemy”, she was fighting to get out of this falsehood and to regain her role as Death, the other.

It was the battle between two hostile Deaths between them, or at least it seems to have been. The new relationship they discovered is picturized as follows :

It was *as if* he were a perfect stranger, *as if* she were infinitely and essentially strange to him, the other half of the world, the dark half of the moon. She waited for his touch *as if* he were a marauder who had come in, infinitely unknown and desirable.... But in the revelations of her body through contact with his body, was *almost* death in itself... It was all the lust and the infinite, maddening intoxication of the senses, a passion of death.

He had always, all his life, had a secret dread of Absolute Beauty. It had always been like a fetish to him, something to fear really. For it was immoral and *against* mankind.... But now he had given way, and with infinite sensual violence gave himself to the realization of this supreme, immoral, Absolute Beauty, in the body of woman. It *seemed* to him that it *came to being* in the body of woman, *under his touch*.... All the shameful things of the body revealed themselves to him now with a sort of sinister, tropical beauty. (pp. 235-238—italics by the present writer)

Here one might notice a small discrepancy between the apparent meaning of the text and some hidden doubt implied by the words such as “as if”, “almost” and “seemed”. Throughout their eroticism, the sensual passion of death, there lies a latent understanding that what they know in touch is “almost” death itself but not exactly death itself : it is the death grasped *in terms of* their sensual thrills. It is the other half of the moon each of them is facing, rather than the outer utter darkness ; and they instinctively avoid noticing the outer darkness, choosing to forget it in the overwhelming sense of the darkness they touch. It is essentially the “fetish”, the fear, and the sensual substitution and diversion from death. Like Anna who sticks to actuality to deny the existence of the invisible, Will assumes that ‘the other’ outside his perception does not exist. Thus he admits ‘the other’ only “in the body of woman” and as “a store of absolute beauties” (p. 236) to be cut and possessed *in* his senses. In the discovery of each tiny beauty, he produces a tiny death which is “against” him and which yet he can just manage to cope with—which at last is caught in his senses. Now the man and the woman exist only in their senses and become the intentional players of Death, knowing all the time that ‘the other’ they know and possess in touch is not Death itself but pretending that it is Death itself for the moment. They play a dangerous game, to enjoy from moment to moment the sense of their own strengths and escape from death. Thus the second generation were ironically separated from Death itself by their pretentious roles of Death. By confining Death in their senses, they also denied their intrinsic roles of Death in themselves.

Their eldest child, Ursula, was also caught in the dangerous “playing with fire”

(p. 302) in her young relationship with Anton Skrebensky. Even in her attitude towards Christianity, she craved with sensuous yearning for Jesus "who could hold her to his breast and lose her there !" (p. 286) But at the same time she was "ashamed of her religious ecstasy," knowing "it was betrayal, a transference of meaning, from the vision world, to the matter-of-fact world." "The vision world," according to her vague knowledge, was "something that did not exist in the everyday world" and "that had no part in the weekday world, nor seen nor touched with weekday hands and eyes," which seems equivalent to Death discussed in this paper. Her sense of shame and self-degradation, together with her impotence to get free from this falsehood, maddened her and made her wish "to become hard, indifferent, brutally callous to everything but just the immediate need, the immediate satisfaction." (p.288) This brutal denial of "sentimentality" has two edges of the blade. On the one hand, she denies that her sensual experience is visionary, that is, related to the invisible outside itself, thus escaping the falsehood and confusion of Death-play. On the other hand, she denies the existence of Death altogether, inside or outside her own senses.

But somehow she is never free from the haunting sense of Death.

This lighted area, lit up by man's completest consciousness, she thought was all the world ; that here all was disclosed for ever. Yet all the time, within the darkness she *had been aware* of points of light, like the eyes of wild beasts, gleaming, penetrating, vanishing. And her soul *had acknowledged* in a great heave of terror only the outer darkness.... And some, *having* for a moment *seen* the darkness, saw it bristling with the tufts of the hyena and the wolf, and some, *having given up* their vanity of the light, *having died* in their own conceit, saw the gleam in the gleam in the eyes of the wolf and the hyena, that it was the flash of the sword of angels, flashing at the door to come in, that the angels in the darkness were lordly and terrible and not to be denied, like the flash of fangs. (pp. 437-438—italics by the present writer)

The repeated use of the perfect tense seems to explain why she could never escape from the sense of the terrible "outer darkness" which she thought was fenced out of her perception. It is because the acknowledgement of Death (which is also the penetration into "conceit") is irrecoverable. It happens beyond the limitation of time. It even seems that it had happened before she knew. She had sensed and feared the outer darkness all along. Even her mother *had* been aware of the moon which "would appear at a clear window in the sky, looking down from far above, like a captive" (p. 181)—the moon, the perceptible sign of Death, as confined within the limited human perception and deprived of its symbolic meaning. Yet she chose to forget this awareness in her sensation. But Ursula could not forget because she was rebelling against falsehood : she could not but see that she was substituting one falsehood for

another. To deny Death altogether was as much a deception as to confine Death within her senses. Such penetration into the "vanity of the light" she seems to have felt coming from the outer darkness, not from inside herself. In other words, it seems, she, her world of knowledge, existed only as the negative substance, ready to fall in before the irresistible penetration of Death, "the gleam in the eye of the wolf and the hyena," "the flash of the sword of angels" of Death. This shows she no longer had the belief or confidence in herself, her world of knowledge, but recognized "only the outer darkness" which was up against her.

In order to face this irresistible outer darkness with courage, and to discover some sort of relationship (balance) with it, she had to seek for her *positive* self in the middle of the disbelief in everything including herself.

Always, always she was spitting out of her mouth the ash and grit of disillusion, of falsity. . . . That which she was, positively, was dark and unrevealed. (p. 437)

Even in the last sentence, however, seems to lie the latent belief that the positive self does exist, though it is "dark and unrevealed" at the moment. What is this self? Ursula repeatedly asked this question at each step of her growth and disillusion. In fact, her whole life-journey of youth, passion, and suffering was the search for her positive self.

At one moment, while she was looking at the shadowy unicellular plant-animal moving under her microscope, she had a revealing experience of the 'self'.

For what purpose were the incalculable physical and chemical activities nodalized in this shadowy, moving speck under her microscope? . . . Was its purpose just mechanical and limited to itself?

It intended to be itself. But what self? Suddenly in her mind the world gleamed strangely, with an intense light, like the nucleus of the creature under the microscope. . . . She could not understand what it all was. She only knew that it was not limited mechanical energy, nor mere purpose of self-preservation and self-assertion. It was a consummation, a being infinite. Self was a oneness with the infinite. To be oneself was a supreme, gleaming triumph of infinity. (p. 441)

"Self was a oneness with the infinite"—the sentence, taken alone, is difficult to understand. What does it mean? Let us presume that "the infinite" is Death because it fits in our discussion. Then one may be tempted to connect the word "oneness" with the mingling and abandoning of self in Death-Mother, but that is misleading. The 'relinquishing' (which means 'degeneration') of self in Death-Mother, and the image of the mindless and yet intent activity of the moving speck—they do not come toge-

ther. It was this intent activity that drew and inspired her, and it moved her because it came from such a tiny shadowy figure. The ground for sympathy lay in the fact that there seemed to be nothing more undefined and blind than this unicellular being, for she herself was blind and undefined. Yet it struck her with strength, with its "nodalized" activity. Here what is important is the difference of terms between "this shadowy, moving speck", and "the world... like the nucleus of the creature" that "gleamed strangely, with an *intense light*". The change from the shadow to the intense light reflects the transition of her knowledge. Suddenly she stepped into the new field of perception when she grasped the activity of the same animal as "not limited" to itself but 'one' with "the infinite". Similarly, the meaning of the phrase, "to be itself", was magically transformed, as it was repeated, from *to be limited to itself* to *to be one with the infinite*. Thus one can say that each movement of this plant-animal is a moving into the unknown, unlimited space outside itself, which is death. Here arises the paradox that each movement of life is a new death to the being. Such realization of self, called "a consummation", is different from the relinquishment or obliteration of self. As the former is called "a supreme, gleaming triumph of infinity", the being faces and fights with Death at each movement. It is owing to this fight that the loser, the being which dies, is at once the winner of the triumph, the new self.

But then, in actuality, did Ursula become the winner of the triumph? That seems to depend upon whether she could meet the real death or not, in other words, whether anybody (or anything) could play the role of Death itself for her and let her be Death itself in turn. Her relationship with Anton Skrebensky, along with her experience of teaching and college-education, is the pilgrimage in search of Death and of freedom from false-Death. The most symbolic scene during the first period of the love between Ursula and Skrebensky is the dancing scene at her uncle's wedding.

There was a wonderful rocking of the darkness, slowly, a great, slow swinging of the whole night, with the music playing lightly on the surface, making the strange, ecstatic, rippling on the surface of the dance, but underneath only one great flood heaving slowly backwards to the verge of oblivion, slowly forward to the other verge, the heart sweeping along each time, and tightening with anguish as the limit was reached.... (p. 318)

Here in the anguish of the heart mingle the pain and pleasure at the prospect of reaching the limit and passing into the oblivion, the utter unconscious state of death and darkness; but one never did break through the limit in the dance because it was only a game—with "the music playing lightly on the surface" and people pressing and weighing on each other to keep themselves in the swinging rhythm of the dance. Gradually Ursula became aware of something beyond the world of the dance, feeling the influence of the great moon looking "not upon her, but right at her" (p. 319) and "balancing all in its revelation." The moon knows no fear, no human limit, in meet-

ing everything (including not only the dance but much outside it) face to face ; and in its fearless watching the moon surpasses and balances all.

And her breast opened to it, she was cleaved like a transparent jewel to its light. . . . Her two breasts opened to make way for it, her body opened wide like a quivering anemone, a soft, dilated invitation touched by the moon. . . . But Skrebensky put his arm round her and led her away. He put a big, dark cloak round her, and sat holding her hand. . . . (p. 319)

The hard inhuman force of the moon to watch and to penetrate, and the "soft, dilated invitation" of her "quivering" body—the contrast *seems* to represent the ideal relationship between Death and life. But the relationship is one-sided : the moon and Ursula never exchange their roles. There is no fighting or tension between the two but only the filling-in of one force into the other in worship and ecstasy. Here is another form of Death-Mother coming back again but as hard and passionless, even destructive ; and Ursula seems to find satisfaction in being relentlessly "cleaved" by the inhuman hand. Why is that so? This is not unrelated to the fact that behind the relationship between the moon and Ursula there is always the hovering presence of Skrebensky as the slighted third. In fact, her seemingly innocent independent motion towards the moon is the outcome (or outlet) of her revolt against his limitation, his inability to face Death and to represent Death in his being. As a soldier he could have faced the physical death, but in living he was only fragmentary. Neither his occupation nor his ideas (nationalism and 'for the greatest good of the greatest number'), not even his sensual physical life, led him any further than the immediate need to preserve himself, to forget, to enjoy, and to kill time, that is, to kill life. Her motion towards the moon is the unintentional denial of him, the demonstration of reducing him to "nothingness" to be left behind. Consequently, his gesture of putting a dark cloak round her shows his stubborn attachment to the role of Death which, she senses and he is let to know vaguely, he is incapable of fulfilling. In doing so, he is denying, refusing to see, and forbidding her to see the presence of Death *beyond* himself. And she, in turn, is forced into the willed role of Death-Mother which accepts him or will at last accept him—the role of the captive Death detained by the human hand.

So her utterly unsympathetic destructiveness against him, which follows, becomes understandable.

He was inert, and he weighed upon her. She sighed in pain. . . .  
If she could but get away to the clean, free moonlight.

'Don't you like me tonight ?' said his low voice, the voice of the shadow over her shoulder. She clenched her hands in the dewy brilliance of the moon, as if she were mad.

'Don't you like me tonight ?' repeated the soft voice.

And she knew that if she turned, she would die. A strange

rage filled her, a rage to tear things asunder. Her hands felt destructive, like metal blades of destruction. (p. 319)

She is divided between the attraction of the soft voice, which maneuvers to enclose her in the blinding shadow of sensuality, and the revolting passion to get clear by reaching for the moon. The persistent repetition of his voice presses on this division. Even while she is seeking most passionately for Death, or because of it, the meeting with false-Death (which wills her to "die" in its shadow) gives her the more and more painful sense of limitation, which drives her into the destructive passion to tear off the veil, to disclose the nothingness and limitedness behind.

Her hard kiss seizing and "destroying him" (p. 322) into non-existence at this time, and her sternly letting him struggle for consummation and finally collapse on her passionless rigid body (on the sandhill by the sea in Sussex) towards the end of the novel—those two scenes, both under the white burning light of the moon, offer essentially the same reaction of fighting and rejecting the trammels of false-Death. Only, the rejection in the first instance was not complete, not consciously so, and she became afraid of what she had done. She tried to make it up and pretended that nothing had occurred. Both had the attachment to each other, which would not let them see what had happened; for he was the hope, the attractive unknown, which she could touch and lay hold of. That was the reason, if not a justifiable one, why they had to come together again after about six years' interval and repeat the struggle and rejection until it was finally irrecoverable.

Lawrence seems to have felt it necessary that she should find disillusionment in everything the man's world (the unknown world which she set out to discover) contained before she could meet Skrebensky again on the equal ground: education, teaching experience, the academic world of college, the society of liberal intellectuals and artists, and the inhuman organization of people around the machine of the mine. But all of her experiences are but the first step into each field, hardly to be called the mature knowledge of the world. Each step is that of the youth being easily entangled, then reacting, and rejecting the world. One should notice that in each of her experiences she was fighting against *somebody* who was exerting his (or her) influence upon her—Mr. Harby, Winifred Inger, Uncle Tom, etc.—that influence being the trend (or the will) of the world which was unknown to her and, therefore, for which she was unprepared. Thus she fought all the time with false-Deaths. It was only through those battles that she was to get clear of the attachment to false-Deaths and to find herself different and distant from them. The reason why she had to come back to Skrebensky was that he had given her "a sense of the vast world, a sense of distances and large masses of humanity" (p. 293) not as an entangled man in it but as an independent isolated man "resting in his own fate" (p. 292) without caring what others might think of him. And he had touched her at a deeper level than any of the following experiences could ever touch her, before the fears and shames of disillusionment immersed her:



He seemed like the gleaming dawn, yellow, radiant, of a long,  
grey, ashy day. (p. 438)

Nevertheless, their coming together again was fated from the beginning, for they only took refuge, the momentary escape, in each other from the world without finding the real unknown in themselves. It was the same dreadful tangle between them, and when she finally casted him off spent and broken on the sand-hill under the moon, a tear ran down her rigid cheek—the tear which the critics in general fail to interpret.<sup>6</sup>

... he watched, drawn tense, for some minutes, watched the un-  
altering, rigid face like metal in the moonlight, the fixed, unsee-  
ing eyes, in which slowly the water gathered, shook with glit-  
tering moonlight, then surcharged, brimmed over and ran trickling,  
a tear with its burden of moonlight, into the darkness, to fall in  
the sand. (p. 480)

The tear shows that all the time she had been passionately seeking for the communion with Death in Skrebensky while mercilessly testing him and remaining unmoved, watching his clinging hands let go from the tight-rope of Death-play. To him she had turned from the edge of the water, where she was facing the moon, and appealed, "I want to go." (p. 479) And while the tear shows their failure, there in it paradoxically lies the only hope for her communion with Death. Although the tear, brimming over, was wasted only to return to the sand and darkness, it once *shook* with the glittering moonlight, which is the sign of her unconquerable passion naïve and spontaneous towards the unknown.

The controversial vision of the horses' attack on her in the woods,<sup>7</sup> too, should be interpreted as part of the reactionary turn of this passion for Death, entangled but starting from the same spontaneous root; for the passion, misled and wasted, was yet again to be falsified when she tried to marry Skrebensky out of the fear of pregnancy. She tried to escape from the thundering horses, but they would not let her. In a flame of agony she climbed up the tree, and fell down on the other side of the hedge, as well as dead but safe from the horses. After a while she recovered just the energy to walk away to the high-road, where she sat on the fence, spent, and found herself "like a stone, unconscious, unchanging, unchangeable, whilst everything rolled by in transience, leaving her there, a stone at rest on the bed of the stream..." (p. 490) Inside herself, when all the other things fell off from her, she saw the hard unaltering self of rejection and isolation, which is Death like the Death in Lydia before which "time went on grey, uncoloured... the landscape unrolled beside her." (pp. 51-52) It can be inferred that with a clearer knowledge Ursula perceived and met the Death in herself, which is further supported by the following declaration of hers.

I have no father nor mother nor lover. I have no allocated place  
in the world of things, I do not belong to Beldover nor to Not-

tingham nor to England nor to this world, they none of them exist. I am trammelled and entangled in them, but they are all unreal. I must break out of it, like a nut from its shell which is an unreality. (p. 493)

And she did come to the belief that "the kernel was the only reality" which was "free and naked and striving to take new root, to create a new knowledge of Eternity in the flux of Time." Death in her was the core of her passion for a new relationship, for a new living, towards Death in another being, in the middle of the entanglement and reactions which inevitably would follow life.

Finally, the rainbow was to stand on the earth as the hope, the sign, of this unconquerable passion, and the reader is prepared for the next act (which eventually became *Women in Love*) in which Ursula will take the role of Death. But whether she can meet the partner, Death in another being, and create a new living between them is quite unforeseeable, which leaves the ambiguous impression of the ending open to attacks.

Thus the static or illogical characters of the novel play their respective allegoric roles in their struggle towards the liberation of Death in themselves. Needless to say, *The Rainbow* is the book of life and dynamic unconsciousness, but its organizing principle is essentially allegoric. Or rather, it is the drive from the realism of chaotic life towards the pure allegory (in which Death performs its central role) that connects the often illogical or maniacal actions and thoughts of the characters. The novel is placed in the quivering middle of this process of reduction and abstraction. The work is the recording of the process—with the realism of life always tending to obfuscate, arrest and falsify the allegoric drive, and with Death fighting back to get free and thus to simplify and strengthen the life in turn.

## NOTES

1. The use of such terms began mainly with F. R. Leavis's *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (London, 1955).
2. M. B. Howe, who calls the novel "allegorical," makes the confusion between the dynamic and the static aspects by regarding "the Blood" or life as the protagonist of the allegory: she is puzzled when she says, "Paradoxically, Lawrence, by blowing life up large-than-life size, has a tendency to make a dead, mechanical process out of it."—*The Art of the Self in D. H. Lawrence* (Athens, Ohio, 1977), p. 33.
3. Typically, R. E. Edward says that "individual characters and experiences are dissipated in the analytic presentation of the central, recurrent experience. . . the unconscious, impersonal forces directing the characters. . . ."—*D. H. Lawrence: Body of Darkness* (London, 1971), p. 67. See also H. M. Daleski, *The Forked Flame: A Study of D. H. Lawrence* (London, 1965).
4. Daleski says, "Skrebensky is even less defined as a man than either Tom or Will; lacking the rooted stability of the one and the passionate aspiration of the other, he has no real identity."—*The Forked Flame*, pp. 108–109.
5. All the quotations of the text of the novel are from D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (Penguin Books, 1949; first pub. by Methuen, 1915).

6. Few critics give explicit interpretations. Daleski irrelevantly says, "Its ultimate import is a recognition on her part that she cannot, without disastrous consequences, try to recoup at night the losses of the day, cannot be Woman, be more than Ursula Brangwen."—*The Forked Flame*, pp. 120-121.
7. Many critics refer to the passage in Lawrence's *Fantasia of the Unconscious* which translates man's dream of horses as "some arrest in the deepest sensual activity of the male."—(Heinemann, 1961; first pub., 1923), p. 168. This seems too vague to mark the special significance of this scene. Graham Hough regards the horses as "passion and ferocity" which subjects her to "the temporary obliteration of personal integrity and awareness. . . ."—*Two Exiles: Lord Byron and D. H. Lawrence* (Univ. of Nottingham pamphlet, 1959), p. 9. Daleski opposes this view and takes E. L. Nicholes's idea: "the anarchy of elemental passion" in the course of Ursula's soul's journey "from the unknown and passing to the unknown."—*The Forked Flame*, pp. 122-123. The latter view is close to the present writer's interpretation, but it becomes meaningful only when it is put in the allegorical context.

January 8, 1980.

## The Allegorical Roles of Characters in *The Rainbow*

Masako Hirai

*The Rainbow* has been called rhythmic, dynamic, mythic. . . and in my previous papers I studied the way it delivers the unconscious psychic movements underlying human relations (not only in the human sphere but also relating to the non-human world of animals, vegetation, the earth, and the cosmic bodies). But what then is the central 'form' of this novel which causes and holds together the almost innumerable forms of such movements? Already F. R. Leavis has pointed out the rhythmic cycle of life and death in nature and in man's history. In order to answer this question from a different angle, in this paper I have sought a hint in the often-neglected 'static' aspect of the characters—especially in the women—and analyzed it as their symbolic or allegorical role in relation to others. The reason I dare to use the term *allegorical* in spite of the vivid dynamic personification of those women is that I think it profitable to separate their symbolic significance to their men (which tends to gather to a single pole) from their own dynamic inner lives (which tend to escape any definition by changing their forms and directions), thus finding the simplest, clearest vision of the central form and seeing how the novel is formed and expanded around it.

What I call static or allegorical appears typically in the visualization of Lydia's wearing black, being silent, and lightly walking as if unseen—the total image which at once attracts and terrifies Tom Brangwen. By studying and defining her role as Death before Tom, one can better understand his overwhelming often-unexplainable contradictory emotions of attraction and fear, the meaning of her "ugly-beautiful" mouth whose kiss leaves him pale, and the development of their marriage which rouses and unfastens his secret desire for death and unreality (for freedom from the storm of life) but which only partly succeeds in setting him free, ending in his physical death in a flood. Such a failure, which seems to be repeated in different forms by three generations, together with Lydia's objection to Tom's always 'taking' her as if she didn't exist, which, too, comes back in different voices of women against their men, can be interpreted as reflecting the one-sidedness of their relationship—that the woman's role is limited to a certain form, a certain understanding of death, by the man who does not or cannot take the role of Death himself. Thus the women's roles of death and their criticism of their limited roles work as the central form or contrivance around which the novel turns.